

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

MEMORANDUM FOR: FEMA Regional Directors
FEMA Acting Regional Directors
Regions I-X

ATTENTION: FEMA Mitigation Division Directors
Regions I-X

FROM: Robert F. Shea
Acting Administrator
Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration

DATE: 12-JUL-01

SUBJECT: Clarification of Funding Criteria for the Construction or
Retrofit of Community Shelters and Safe Rooms

A January 10, 2001 memorandum from Michael J. Armstrong established criteria for FEMA funding of the construction or retrofit of community shelters and safe rooms. This memorandum seeks to provide additional clarification of acceptable performance standards for storm shelters or safe rooms.

In addition to the guidance set forth in the January memorandum, please note that FEMA fully supports the National Storm Shelter Association (NSSA) in its creation of the NSSA standard. Any shelter that has been demonstrated to meet the NSSA standard meets or exceeds all FEMA recommended requirements.

Attached to this memorandum is a copy of the January memorandum for your convenience. Please share this additional information with each State so that applicants may develop the most effective mitigation measures for the safety of their communities. Any questions about the performance standards may be addressed to Paul Tertell at (202) 646-3935.

Attachment

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

MEMORANDUM FOR: FEMA Regional Directors
Regions I -X

ATTENTION: FEMA Mitigation Division Directors
Regions I -X

FROM: Michael J. Armstrong
Associate Director for Mitigation

DATE: 10-JAN-01

SUBJECT: Funding Criteria for the Construction or Retrofit of
Community Shelters and Safe Rooms

Recently, questions have been raised concerning the criteria required for FEMA funding for improvements to community shelters and safe rooms. This memorandum is intended to provide you with guidance on two important issues: First, whether FEMA mitigation funds may be used for improvements that will enhance protection against high wind and tornado events in an existing community shelter or safe room, but will not achieve near absolute protection. Second, if facility improvements must meet cost effectiveness requirements.

Project applications requesting FEMA funding for high wind and tornado mitigation measures involving the construction or enhancement of community shelters and safe rooms must meet all applicable requirements in FEMA's technical manuals. These currently include: "National Performance Criteria for Tornado Shelters", FEMA 320 Second Edition "Taking Shelter From the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House", and FEMA 361 "Design and Construction Guidance for Community Shelters." Any questions about these requirements can be addressed to Paul Terrell at (202) 646-3935. These standards were carefully designed by FEMA, in partnership with leading wind engineers and a steering committee of American Red Cross and building officials, to provide for "near absolute protection." If a retrofit or installation of a refuge area is attempted for a lesser wind event or for a lower threshold of protection, lives are being exposed to a greater degree of risk than is acceptable. I have determined that eligible hazard mitigation projects for community shelters and safe rooms must meet the requirements of FEMA technical manuals.

In addition, improvements to shelter areas funded under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program must be determined to be cost effective. The Stafford Act and its implementing regulations require that HMGP projects be cost-effective (44 CFR 206.434(b)). The benefit-cost software provided with FEMA 361 will assist you in making this determination.

I would ask that you please share this information with each State. I hope that this information will allow you to better assist applicants in developing the most effective mitigation measures for the safety of their communities. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert F. Shea, Director, Program Support Division at (202) 646-3619.